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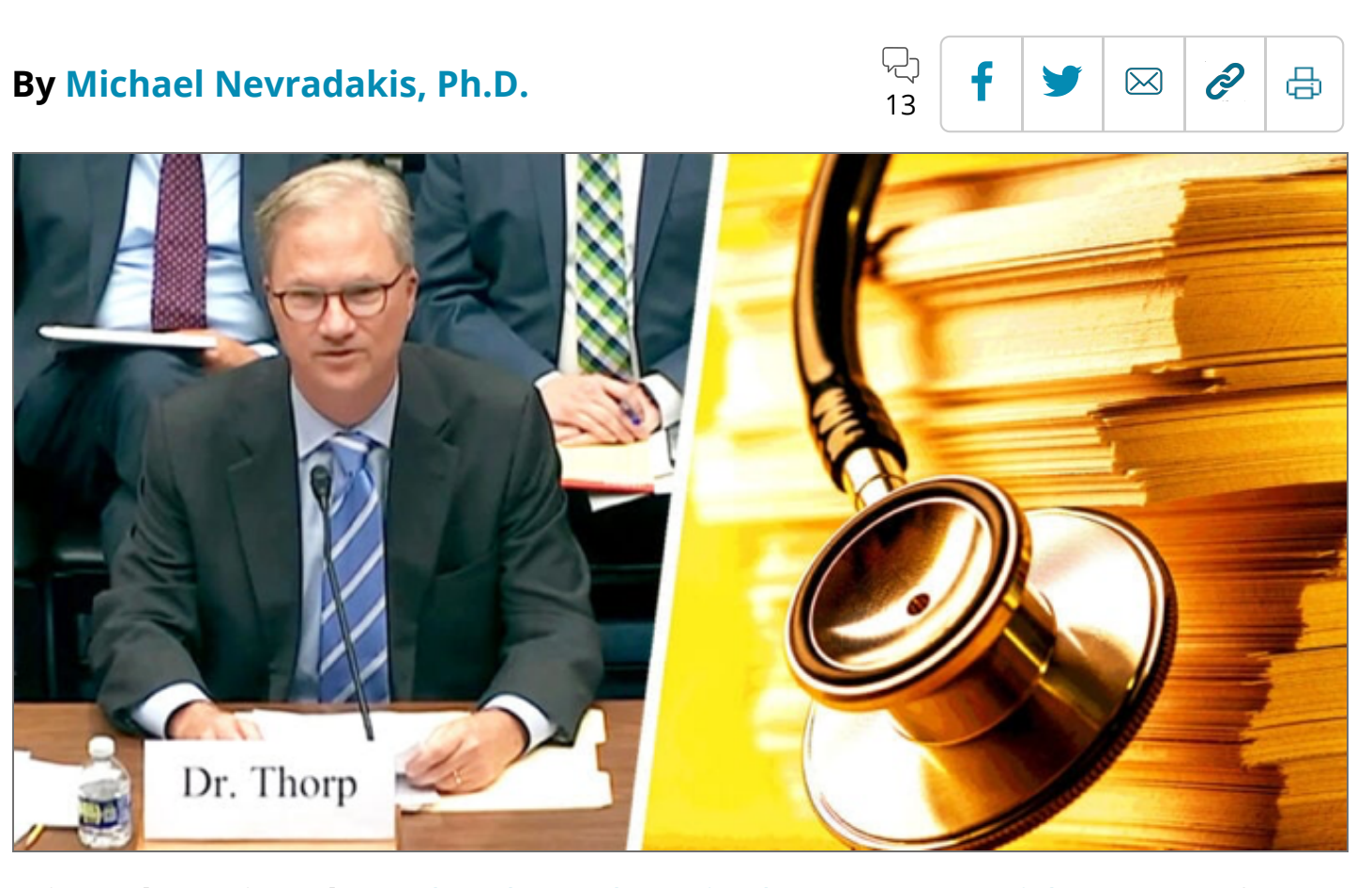
'Tacit Admission of Guilt': Two Top Journal Editors Decline to Testify Before Congress on Scientific Censorship

The U.S. House Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic invited the editors-in-chief of Nature, Science and The Lancet to testify on government interference in the peer-reviewed publication process. Only Science's editor-in-chief participated in Tuesday's hearing.

By Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D.

13



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Only 1 of 3 science journal editors invited to testify before Congress on government interference in the peer-reviewed publication process accepted the invitation this week.

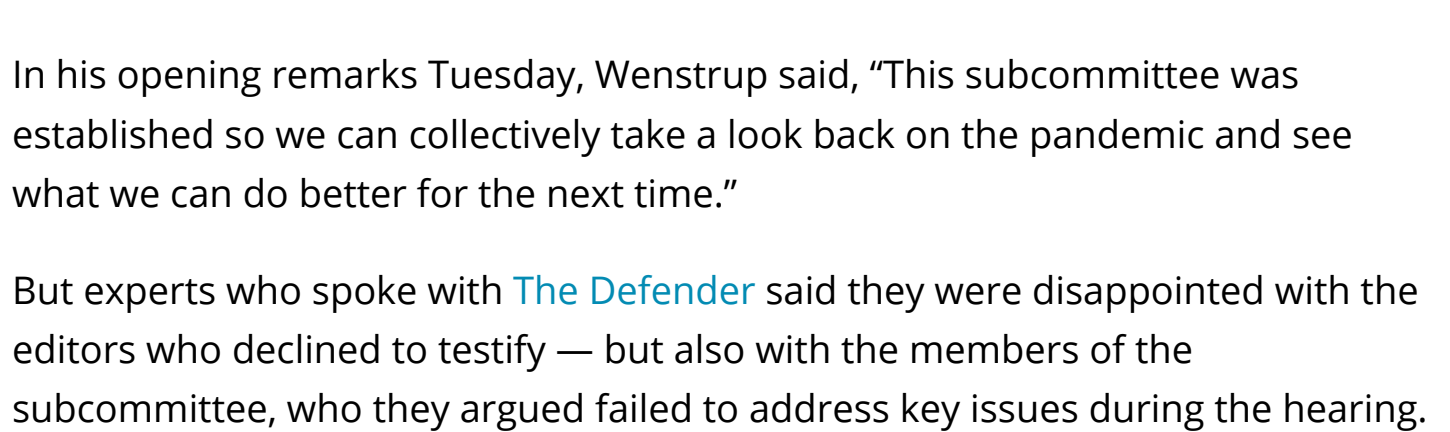
Holden Thorp, Ph.D., editor-in-chief of the Science family of journals, on Tuesday testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Magdalena Skipper, Ph.D., editor-in-chief of Nature, and Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of The Lancet, "declined to participate," according to the subcommittee's website.

"We invited the editors-in-chief of The Lancet, Nature and Science. Only the editor of Science had the courage to come and help us be better," Subcommittee Chair Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) said.

In his opening remarks Tuesday, Wenstrup said, "This subcommittee was established so we can collectively take a look back on the pandemic and see what we can do better for the next time."

But experts who spoke with The Defender said they were disappointed with the editors who declined to testify — but also with the members of the subcommittee, who they argued failed to address key issues during the hearing.


"The Wuhan Cover-Up"
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Cardiologist Dr. Peter McCullough told The Defender, "The committee and Thorp disappointed academic researchers and the public alike."

McCullough, author of more than 1,000 science journal articles, added:

> "Thorp was silent on harmful retractions of fully published papers … This has happened repeatedly for manuscripts describing early treatment(s) and protocols for ambulatory acute SARS-CoV-2 infection and for reports of COVID-19 vaccine injuries, disabilities and deaths.
>
> "Who is behind these retractions? Why are they working to suppress early therapeutic options for patients and scrub any concerns over vaccine safety?"

Epidemiologist and public health research scientist M. Nathaniel Mead told The Defender, "It seems very telling" that Skipper and Horton skipped Tuesday's hearing.

"In the context of SARS-CoV-2 origins, these two journals have been accused of being unduly influenced by the pharmaceutical industry and government agencies," Mead said. "Such conflicts can impede unbiased scientific reporting and commentaries."

"Skipper and Horton's absence would seem to be a tacit admission of guilt on the part of the two journals they represent," said Mead, who wrote a peer-reviewed paper that was retracted by the journal Cureus after publication.

McCullough said two papers for which he was senior author were retracted. "In both instances, the public and the practicing community were harmed by the intentional omission of critical side effects from the knowledge base on these products."

Independent journalist Paul D. Thacker has investigated scientific censorship for The Disinformation Chronicle. He told The Defender, "The science and medical journals did not publish the best research available during the pandemic. They just served as gatekeepers to protect people, institutions and corporations in power."

Thacker added:

> "Holden Thorp should resign. He oversaw a news section that ran several fake stories about the pandemic to misinform the scientific community. And Science published studies that have been noted in the peer-reviewed literature for poor statistics to deny a possible lab accident. It's a historical low point for this publication.
>
> "Nothing will change from these hearings. My only hope is that some researchers will understand how corrupt the scientific process has become and this hearing will spur them to make change."

'No place for politics' or government influence over journals

During his opening remarks, Wenstrup said the hearing was not intended "to see how the government can be more involved in the journal editorial process, but to make sure that the government does not involve itself or influence this process."

"There's no denying the awesome power these periodicals as well as their editors hold over the medical and scientific communities," Wenstrup said. As a result, "there can be no place for politics or inappropriate government influence of journals."

But Wenstrup accused the journals and their editors of not always being "arbiters of truth." Instead, he said, they "provide a forum where scientific claims are made, defended, and debated by peer review." Wenstrup added, "We saw a breakdown of that during the pandemic."

"Rather than the journals being a wealth of information and opinions about this novel virus of which we knew so little, they helped establish a party line that literally put a chilling effect on scientific research regarding the origins of COVID-19," Wenstrup said.

Wenstrup cited the "Proximal Origin" paper — published by Nature in March 2020 — as an example, saying that it helped "set a precedent … that the natural origin of COVID-19 was the only plausible theory."

"Anyone else who had even the inkling of another plausible scientific thought was immediately labeled a conspiracy theorist … How is that acceptable in the scientific community when the entire crux of the field is open for debate?" Wenstrup said.

During his opening remarks, Ranking Member Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.) contradicted Wenstrup's statements, claiming the subcommittee has not proven that top government public health officials such as Drs. Anthony Fauci and Francis Collins orchestrated the publication of the "Proximal Origin" paper.

RFK Jr. and Brian Hooker's
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'Clear evidence of malfeasance and dishonesty'

Thorp told members of the subcommittee that he is "extraordinarily proud of the Science journals' work" and "of the role that the scientific enterprise plays in society."

He said the Science journals "abide by a rigorous multi-step peer-review process" and "a careful process to ensure that the reviewers do not have a conflict of interest." This "well-established process," he said, "was applied consistently to the nearly 9,000 research papers submitted to the Science family of journals related to SARS-CoV-2."

Thorp referred to a May 2021 letter by virologist Jesse D. Bloom that Science published in its commentary section. "This letter called for a thorough investigation of a lab origin of COVID-19," Thorp said, citing the commentary as evidence the journal did not conduct viewpoint censorship.

"Publication of this letter turned the tide in the discussion of COVID origins toward considering the possibility of a lab origin," Thorp said.

Thorp also referred to two papers, by virologists Michael Worobey and Jonathan E. Pekar, published in Science's research section 2022 that supported but "[did] not conclusively prove the theory of natural origin." He said the government did not influence the publication of these papers.

"To be clear and to state upfront, no government officials from the White House or the NIH [National Institutes of Health] prompted or participated in the review or editing of [these] papers by us," Thorp said.

Upon questioning by Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) and Rep. Deborah Ross (D-N.C.) about communications between Fauci, Collins and Thorp in May 2021, Thorp said they supported an investigation into the origins of COVID-19 at the time and did not dissuade Science from publishing the Bloom letter.

Responding to Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa), Thorp acknowledged that opinion pieces "go to 8,000 reporters four days before they're published." Because some of these pieces mention government figures, he "from time to time let[s] them know ahead of time that there's an opinion piece coming that they might get asked about."

"Scientists are not and never will be perfect," Thorp said. "We are human, but the scientific method enables us to reach beyond our individual limitations by requiring evidence and constant self-correction. It helped us end the pandemic."

Referring to the Worobey and Pekar papers, Wenstrup said, "It seems that these studies, much like 'Proximal Origin' … were used to stifle debate."

Similarly, Mead told The Defender that, in recent years, "It seems clear that prestigious high-impact journals like Nature and The Lancet were inclined to prioritize certain narratives or findings that align with the interests of their influential stakeholders."

"The result has been a suppression of alternative theories or evidence that diverges from these interests, undermining the integrity and objectivity of scientific inquiry," Mead said, adding that this obstructed the "open exchange of information critical for understanding how this pandemic got created in the first place."

"The more insidious fundamental issue concerns the biases of the editors themselves and the behind-the-scenes communications they receive from industry and government sources that want them to uphold a specific narrative," Mead said.

Noting that Democrat members of the subcommittee appeared to defend former government officials like Fauci and Collins during the hearing, Mead said, "It seems fairly clear … that the mega financial relationships between biopharmaceutical companies and the Democratic Party have tainted the conversation around the politicization of science."

"Why are Fauci and Collins being so assiduously protected by the Democrats when there is clear evidence of malfeasance and dishonesty on their parts?" Mead asked. "This seems to be yet another attempt to whitewash what happened during the pandemic."

Deleted Thorp tweet contradicts his congressional testimony

Wenstrup questioned Thorp about a now-deleted March 2023 tweet referring to the origins of COVID-19, in which Thorp said, "One side has scientific evidence, the other has a mediocre episode of Homeland," noting that "the tweet appears to contradict your testimony today."

"I was not as careful expressing my personal opinions on my personal Twitter page as I should have," Thorp said. "That does happen on social media. From time to time, I've gotten off Twitter and I highly recommend that."

Wenstrup also asked Thorp about a November 2021 editorial in which he claimed that research allegedly conducted by the University of North Carolina, the EcoHealth Alliance and the Wuhan Institute of Virology on inserting furin cleavage sites into novel coronaviruses did not occur.

Thorp said he is under pressure to write a 720-word editorial "every two weeks" and, at the time, he "was going from what was reported in news stories" about the issue.

Mead told The Defender that Thorp's admission that he was basing his editorials on information reported in news stories "is quite alarming."

"Relying solely on mainstream news reports rather than direct investigation through primary sources and interviews with Ralph Baric and other researchers risks perpetuating misinformation and totally undermines the integrity of scientific inquiry," Mead said.

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'Redactions were never mentioned' during the hearing

"The government will never earn the trust back from the Americans by deeming all information that it doesn't like as misinformation, nor will it deserve that trust if that's what our government is doing," Wenstrup said in his closing remarks.

But experts told The Defender that there was much that Wenstrup and other members of the subcommittee left out of Tuesday's hearing.

"Congress needs to explore ways to cut off taxpayer funding for journals that do not want to be accountable to taxpayers," Thacker said.

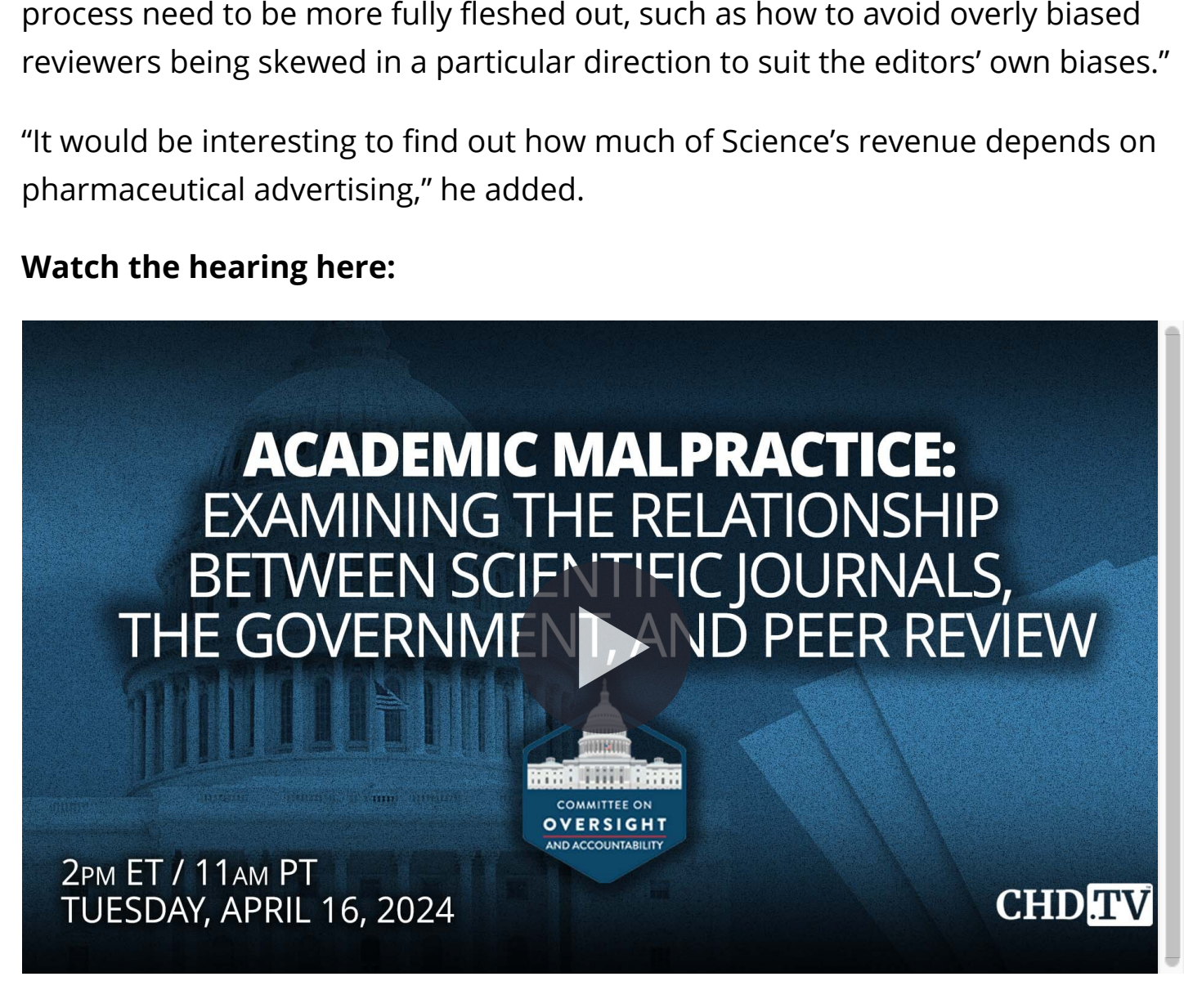
"The behavior of Nature has been atrocious, both in terms of the biased news they ran during the pandemic and the corrupt studies they published, such as the 'Proximal Origin' paper, which has all the hallmarks of ghostwriting that I looked into while leading congressional investigations," Thacker added.

Mead said the relationships of key virologists with Fauci and the Wuhan Institute of Virology "should have been discussed openly" during the hearing.

"Retractions were never mentioned in the context of scientific journals and censorship by those journals," Mead added. "Problems with the peer review process need to be more fully fleshed out, such as how to avoid overly biased reviewers being skewed in a particular direction to suit the editors' own biases."

"It would be interesting to find out how much of Science's revenue depends on pharmaceutical advertising," he added.

Watch the hearing here: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Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D.

Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D., based in Athens, Greece, is a senior reporter for The Defender and part of the rotation of hosts for CHD.TV's "Good Morning CHD."

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Char
7 days ago
Those in power are not held to account for any dirty thing they do. Everyone knows the system is rigged against the average guy. Our Constitution tells us to seek Justice ourselves when our government is corrupt to the core. The rich & powerful are not going to turn themselves in. We will continue to get dumped on until we seek Justice, "against any enemy foreign or domestic..."
11 0 Reply

Les Preston
7 days ago edited
How much of these congressional hearings do the public see? Are they broadcast on TV. Are notices being given about their presentation? Is the media totally responsible whether or not to present them or is the government? It's so frustrating to see Senator Johnson just be ignored. Where is the senatorial respect for their position in government? -blank pages in response to senate inquires, refusal to attend proceedings. Why can't they carry the same weight as judges when it comes to failure to show up for hearings or receiving information material to the hearing?

""Why are Fauci and Collins being so assiduously protected by the Democrats when there is clear evidence of malfeasance and dishonesty on their parts?" Mead asked. "This seems to be yet another attempt to whitewash what happened during the pandemic." Isn't it obvious- It's an election year. Can't have their party, the governing party responsible for what happened under their watch, looking bad.
11 0 Reply

AveBkr
6 days ago
The whole journal and peer-review process needs to be torn down and to start afresh, and not just in science and medicine. Same with pretty much all of academia, which is fully captured.
7 0 Reply

jwm79
6 days ago
Nothing to see here, just the guilty exercising their right to remain silent (or to obfuscate).
6 0 Reply

Paul Hastilow
7 days ago
Over the years, science has created, equipment and Instruments to detect "Lies"
That have/ Will / can, cause the Truth to never be Attained.
Why are these "AIDS" not being used in this Instance….?
What happened to "Polygraph Testing"…….far less Invasive than having deadly Vaxxines administered….!
If a "Suspect" refuses to give Evidence "Freely" then they should be locked up until their Jaws are Unlocked voluntarily with incarceration….!
Failing that, Drag them screaming into an Agency Cell and Administer the Tests..!
I don't see how this system has not been used to get to the Truth…?
Or would they "Prefer Waterboarding" or "Finger Nail Extraction"….?
Wilful "Contempt of Congress" must be Reversed to "Voluntary Compliance"
No Plea Deals, No Corrupt Entrapment, just the "God's Honest Truth".
That's if we wish to see MAGA…..again.!
5 0 Reply

CastleConnell
6 days ago
Ivermectin was deliberately suppressed, the rest are excuses, cover-ups, lies and greed. They are talking about saving lives, yet they stopped lives being saved again deliberately by denying lifesaving drugs.
4 0 Reply

Jonathan E
6 days ago
North American Totalitarianism built on an avalanche of Corporate Pharma/Media/Government terror dis and misinformation during the Covid Era. And our illustrious leaders are hoping to sign a binding Health Treaty with the WHO. Trudeau has petitioned the WHO to include climate crisis lockdowns and restrictions into the treaty.
3 0 Reply

RbrtII
6 days ago
This has got to be the most useless yet of these Congressional hearings. I'll disagree with the other commenter here though. There is value in this being reported, especially since almost no one else does. The uselessness of Congress and all these various authorities needs to be constantly on display.
3 0 Reply

r2bzjudge
6 days ago
Mead told The Defender that Thorp's admission that he was basing his editorials on information reported in news stories "is quite alarming."

Especially since the mainstream media was parroting official disinformation.

"Relying solely on mainstream news reports rather than direct investigation... risks perpetuating misinformation and totally undermines the integrity of scientific inquiry," Mead said.

No reason to think that wasn't intentionally done to perpetuate misinformation. The CDC just released a flawed report claiming Covid shots have nothing to do with the sudden deaths in young people and mainstream media outlets jumped to parrot. Obviously, the Covid shots are causing sudden deaths, as they occurred at an excess rate just after the injections went public.
2 0 Reply

E_via
6 days ago
"Light touch" questioning there by Wenstrup and the subcommittee members. What a waste.
2 0 Reply

brbg
6 days ago
All of the medical journals should be forbidden by law to take ANY money from Big pharma.
3 1 Reply

p. gutierrez
6 days ago edited
Nevradakis citing Holden Thorp of 'Science' journals,

"journals abide by a rigorous multi-step peer-review process.....To be clear and to state upfront, no government officials from the White House or the NIH [National Institutes of Health] prompted or participated in the review or editing of [these] papers by us," Thorp said.".

But did Thorp put on record for Congress what that standard 'peer-review process' consisted of? And why would anyone let the NIH participate in the 'peer review' process, except for 'intramural' articles involving the NIH and its private partner/university/vaccine maker partner? Much of the negative comments by some virologists about some scientific articles, are steeped in ridiculing and shaming, rather than the official "peer review" process. 'Catch and kill' policy of tabloids such as the National Enquirer, that has entangled Donald Trump in 'hush money' schemes. 'Kill' articles, don't publish articles, that suggest an American origin of Covid-19. Publish only articles that suggest a Chinese origin of Covid-19. Big time 'hush money' being paid out by that west coast billionaire who first ideated the Covid-19 plandemic in 2018.

Much of Nevradakis article is about what Epidemiologist Nathaniel Mead told the Defender

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0 0 Reply

mcwinaz
7 days ago
All theatrics at this point that will yield NO CRIMINAL CHARGES for anyone who deserves it. Stop reporting on this already..
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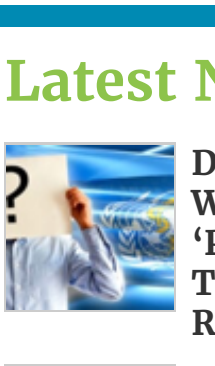
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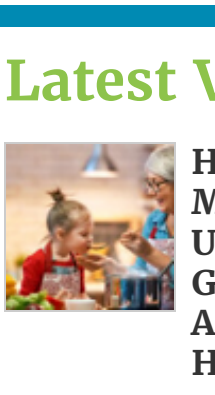
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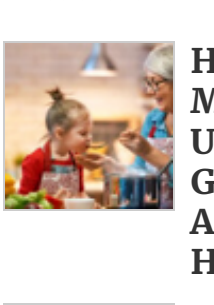
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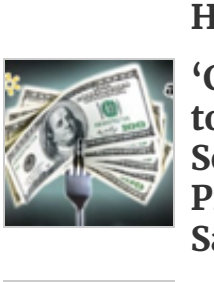
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